

Health Recommendations for a Flood Event

Health recommendations

- Anyone with moderate to severe respiratory disease should consult their healthcare provider prior to participating in cleanup efforts.
- It is recommended that anyone participating in the cleanup be 16 years of age or older.
- Handwashing or the use of hand sanitizer is the best defense against germs and bacteria. Do it often, especially before handling food, or any other hand-to-mouth behavior.

Checklist of items to take to cleanup site

- ✓ Sturdy, closed-toe, footwear
- ✓ Long-sleeved shirts and pants
- ✓ Goggles
- ✓ Protective gloves (non-porous)
- ✓ Under some work conditions, NIOSH approved respirator masks (may be necessary (e.g., for exposures to mold-contaminated materials/environments, or other recognized hazards). Carefully follow the instructions to fit the N95 mask after purchase.
- ✓ Water – 8 oz. for every hour of work

Protective Clothing

- Sturdy, closed-toed, footwear
- Long-sleeved shirts and pants
- Goggles
- Protective gloves

Drinking /Washing/Cleaning Water

Water from after a flood should be considered unsafe. Polluted water may contain organisms that may make you sick. Use bottled water for drinking, other ingestion or handwashing. Do not assume water from your pipes safe.

Remember to wash your hands frequently and drink at least 8oz of water for every hour worked in the heat.

Vaccines needed for working in homes/businesses

Extra immunizations are not needed during floods or other disasters.

Tetanus

If you are dealing with a flood or other disaster, you do not need to take time to get a

tetanus shot right now. Make sure you and your family is up-to-date with tetanus shots, here is when they are needed:

- Adults: Get a tetanus booster every 10 years
- Children: Get a series of four shots between 2 months and 18 months of age, and booster shots at 4 to 6 years of age and Tdap at 11 to 12 years of age.

If you are wounded

- If you get a wound, check with your doctor or clinic to see if you need a tetanus shot. It will depend on the type of wound and when you last had a shot. Being up-to-date with your tetanus vaccination can make treatment for any wound easier.

Hepatitis A

There is no reason for people to get a hepatitis A shot during floods or other disasters. Hepatitis A disease is not a risk when working in floodwaters.

Hepatitis B

There is no reason for people to get hepatitis B shots during floods or other disasters. Hepatitis B disease is not a risk in floods.

Property cleanup health recommendations

Wash hands often and well, especially before handling food, or any other hand-to-mouth behavior. Hand sanitizers can be used in addition to handwashing, but **not** in place of washing.

- Do not touch mold with bare hands.
- Open windows and doors to provide fresh air.
- To prevent carbon monoxide poisoning, never use gas-powered tools or generators inside or within a confined area.
- If you are cut or burned during cleanup, immediately wash the area with soap and clean water. Later, talk to a health professional to find out if you need more treatment.
- Take rests, drink plenty of liquids, and protect yourself against sun and heat.
- Clothes and footwear that were worn at the cleanup site should be taken off as soon as possible after you leave the site. The clothes should be placed in the laundry and washed in hot water separately from other clothing.

Preventing infection during clean-up

To avoid injury and prevent infection while doing disaster cleanup, follow these steps:

- **Wash your hands** often using soap and water.
- Wear protective clothing to prevent injury.
- Heavy, hard-soled shoes

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants
- Heavy, waterproof, cut-resistant work gloves
- Safety goggles

Take care of wounds right away

For minor wounds:

- **Wash your hands** first before caring for a cut
- Clean the wound with soap and water
- Pat the wound area dry and apply a clean, dry dressing

For more serious wounds:

- **Wash your hands** first before caring for a wound
- Clean the dirt around the wound
- Loosely cover the wound if possible and seek medical care

Heat injury prevention

If you must work in high heat and humidity conditions, you should:

- Work in 1 hour shifts with 15 minute breaks in between
- Drink 1cup (8oz) of water every hour. Small amounts every 15 minutes
- Wear loose, lightweight clothes. Don't wear too many layers.
- Avoid being in unventilated areas, if possible.
- Schedule heavy exertion tasks earlier in the day or evening, when the heat index is lower.
- Work in a buddy system to watch for signs and symptoms of heat-related illness
- Try to work in shaded areas, if possible
- Watch for symptoms of heat cramps or heat exhaustion.
 - Heat cramps can cause painful muscle cramps.
 - Heat exhaustion can cause headaches, dizziness, nausea, or vomiting. It can also make you thirsty or tired.
- If you have symptoms of heat cramps or heat exhaustion, you should cool your body down right away to avoid getting heat stroke and **seek medical attention**.

To cool your body down, you can:

- Spray yourself with cool water and then sit in front of a fan.
- Move into the shade, or go into an air-conditioned building
- Drink water or sports drinks. Do NOT have drinks with alcohol or caffeine.
- Take off any extra clothing you are wearing.
- Put a cold pack or cool cloth on your neck or under your armpit.

Symptoms of Dehydration

- People with mild dehydration might not notice any symptoms.
- As dehydration gets worse, it can cause symptoms such as:
 - Feeling thirsty
 - Urinating less often or having dark yellow or brown urine
 - A dry mouth or cracked lips
 - Feeling tired or confused
 - Feeling dizzy or light-headed
 - Eyes that look sunken in the face
- Severe dehydration can lead to life threatening illness. Seek medical attention immediately.

Illness after the cleanup

If you or your family members experience any health problems or illness after the cleanup, you should contact a health care provider. Advise the provider of your work at the Ellicott City flood site and let them determine the best course of action.

If you do not have a health care provider, you can visit any of the Urgent Care facilities in the community.